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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

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National Intelligence Council

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6 November 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Frederick L. Wetters *FLW*
National Intelligence Officer for Africa

SUBJECT: South Africa: The Soviet "Legitimate Representative"
Strategy Gaining Momentum

The Strategy

1. The USSR is pursuing in South Africa its established strategy of obtaining for the liberation movement over which it has the most influence general world recognition as the sole "legitimate representative" of its people. The Soviets pursued this strategy throughout the 1960s and early 1970s in Africa and elsewhere--promoting the MPLA in Angola (when it was clearly less effective and less organized than Holden Roberto's GRAE/FNLA), the PAIGC in Cape Verde/Guinea-Bissau, and SWAPO in Namibia quickly come to mind, as do Soviet efforts on behalf of the PLO and NLF/Vietcong. Invariably, the Soviets will as quickly as possible mask their direct role behind various "progressive" fronts, spokesmen, and governments so that to the ordinary observer the Soviets appear only to be supporting someone else's initiative. In Africa, this usually involves governments sympathetic to Moscow--Ethiopia, Mozambique, Madagascar, Congo, Benin, and Angola--taking the lead to form an African "consensus." The strategy denies any world support to alternate groups and creates a Manichean situation which facilitates the success of the Soviet surrogate--Western support flows in without jeopardizing Soviet influence and/or control. The chosen Soviet vehicle in South Africa for this strategy is the African National Congress (ANC).

The ANC-Soviet Connection

2. The Soviets have considerable influence over the ANC, both directly (through funding, training, and supply of arms and facilities) and indirectly. The indirect influence is exercised through the South African Communist Party (SACP), a semi-clandestine party totally loyal to

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Moscow. The SACP is overtly accepted as a full partner of the ANC and known SACP members are allowed participation in the ANC while still retaining their SACP membership. In fact, the ANC National Executive Committee--the politburo of the party--has 15 of its 30 members known or suspected as SACP members, and SACP officials fill many key ANC positions, including secretary general and leader of the paramilitary wing. SACP members also dominate ANC affiliates such as the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Many external ANC offices are run by SACP members who receive support from local Communist parties--the UK being a prime example of this. The fact that the ANC publication Sechaba is printed in East Germany and is virulently anti-US and pro-Soviet is yet another example of the Soviet channel of influence and direction. While Intelligence Community analysts are not totally in agreement that Moscow directs the ANC, all agree that it has strong influence within the ANC. For my part, I believe the case for direction is persuasive and I plan another paper to examine this soon.

South African Black Representation

3. There is at present no generally accepted--by black South Africans--party or organization which represents all or a majority of black South Africans. There are numerous groups--associational, such as trade union and business group leaders; religious, both liberal (Bishop Tutu) and conservative (Zionist Church); community, and tribal (such as Gatsha Buthelezi). The Organization of African Unity and the United Nations both do not grant exclusivity to the ANC--other groups, such as the Pan-Africanist Congress, are also recognized as spokesmen for black South Africans.

4. Nelson Mandela: To the extent that one South African black has national popularity in South Africa it is Mandela. Much of this popularity is mythic, since Mandela has by dint of being in prison for 21 years avoided having to make any decisions, statements, or policy moves which might alienate segments of the black community. Mandela himself, jailed for admitted leadership of terrorism, is a self-confessed saboteur and admirer of Communism who continues to oppose peaceful change and supports armed revolution (recent Lofton/Thomas interview in The Washington Times).

Dialogue, Negotiations and the ANC

5. Many individuals and governments who wish to see nonviolent, evolutionary change in South Africa advocate talks or dialogue between the Botha Government and black spokesmen and groups, as does US policy. Indeed, the Botha Government declares its willingness to meet and conduct a dialogue with all black leaders who eschew violence and revolution. The principal legal opposition party, the PFP, has promoted the concept of a national roundtable conference to develop peacefully policy alternatives to apartheid, and this concept has gained some international currency. Some South Africans--encouraged in part by some foreign

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governments and observers--have traveled to Lusaka to meet with ANC leaders in an attempt to engage the ANC in peaceful negotiated change. All such efforts have failed and badly misread the ANC position.

6. The ANC leadership describes itself as the only representative of all South Africans and has given no indication that it would accept participation in talks with any entity other than the South African Government. As regards talks, the ANC position is rather clear. In August 1985, ANC President Nelson Mandela, through his wife, gave definitive guidance--"there is no room for peaceful struggle." He opposed any national convention and maintained that the armed struggle was the only correct path. This line has been somewhat obfuscated by ANC leaders abroad, who instead pose impossible preconditions to any talks with the Botha government. These are: release all detainees, especially Mandela; unban the ANC and allow it to freely operate; no truce or end to the armed struggle; end the state of emergency; no other parties to be included in talks; and enter talks only with the agenda of dismantling apartheid and with the white government committed not to remain in power. In effect, the ANC will talk only about terms of surrender. ANC meetings with delegations of South Africans in Lusaka must be assessed as mischievous and as ploys to divide white opinion rather than any serious dialogue.

Recent Developments

7. Recent developments demonstrate that the Soviet strategy to obtain unique "legitimate representation" status is gaining momentum. Internationally, the campaigns to free Nelson Mandela are receiving increasing support in the Third World and the West. More and more moderate governments--exemplified by the recent visit of Senegal President Diouf--are counseling us that Mandela must be freed and the South African Government must negotiate with the ANC. UNESCO's recent decision to fund the Solomon Mhlangu Freedom College in Tanzania--an exclusively ANC training school--may be a harbinger of other Soviet efforts to get UN organizations to deal exclusively with the ANC. Even among South Africans, pilgrimages by parliamentary opposition figures, business leaders, students and cleric groups to Lusaka (ANC Headquarters) and elsewhere in Zambia for talks with the ANC serve to legitimize the ANC as the sole alternative to the Botha government. A statement by one liberal South African clergyman illustrates the growing success of this effort. Reverend Nico Smith, as quoted in the 3 November New York Times, referred to the ANC as "the other party in the conflict."

US Policy

8. To the extent US policy promotes talks between the South African Government and all opposition groups, it both combats and advances this Soviet tactic. US and other efforts, for example, to promote Chief Buthelezi as a valid black spokesman damage the ANC

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development of black groups such as trade unions and community groups facilitates the growth of genuine spokespeople as long as there is due diligence that such assistance does not enhance the status of ANC surrogates and fronts. Unfortunately, there is a real question whether such diligence is being performed. When senior USG spokesmen call for the release of Nelson Mandela and promote talks with the ANC, we in fact advance the Soviet objective--and such statements are increasing. The June US condemnation of a rather finely focused South African raid on ANC officials in Botswana (much more finely focused than similar Israeli raids on PLO targets) was a deviation from the previous policy of condemning paramilitary action from all parties, and the absence of any US statements condemning ongoing ANC terrorism--and they have been absent of late--also has the effect of legitimizing ANC presence in neighboring states. I am concerned that there are some in the USG who for various reasons--ideology, convenience--would like us to accord the ANC the status the Soviets seek for it--the only "legitimate" representative group for all or most South Africans. (In a similar situation, much of the USG accords SWAPO just such a role in Namibia--to our considerable disadvantage.)

Near-Term Future

9. Since by any objective standard the Soviet "legitimize the ANC campaign" is gaining strength, there would seem to be no incentive for the Soviets not to push harder. It would seem likely that the next year will see new efforts by the Soviets--both directly and through a host of fronts and surrogates--to enshrine the ANC as the "sole legitimate spokesman for South Africa." Such moves will likely take place in the UN, OAU, and other regional groupings, and the ANC will continue to be the beneficiary of major Soviet Bloc media promotion, especially in the West and the United States. We are already dangerously close to the point where any black leader or group apart from Mandela and the ANC will not receive credibility internationally (nor domestically in the US), and in fact will be successfully tarred by the ANC as a "sellout" or "Uncle Tom."

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